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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAMA 000679

SIPDIS

CENTCOM FOR GENERAL PETRAEUS FROM AMBASSADOR ERELI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2019

TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR MANAMA DIALOGUE, DECEMBER 11-13

REF: A. MANAMA 660 B. MANAMA 628 C. MANAMA 651 Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

- 1.(C) General Petraeus, you will arrive in Bahrain at a time of introspection for the Bahraini regime as this year's IISS Manama Dialogue coincides with the death of his father, Emir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa in 1999, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa inherited a country torn by sectarianism.
- 2.(C) Following the death of his father, Emir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa in 1999, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa inherited a country torn by sectarianism.
- 3.(C) A graduate of the Mons Officer Cadet School and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, King Hamad takes a leading role in directing the Bahraini military.
- 4.(C) Bahrain was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally in 2002, and King Hamad believes it is important that Bahrain do its part in support of regional stability.
- 5.(C) King Hamad views an activist foreign policy as essential for a small state like Bahrain that wants its interests to be considered in the international community.
- 6.(C) Bahrain was one of the first Gulf states to reopen its embassy in Baghdad, and, while wary of the Maliki government, has reached out to Iraq to improve relations.
- 7.(C) King Hamad understands that Bahrain cannot prosper if he rules by repression. Bahrain's civil society is active and is engaged with Middle East issues.
- 8.(S) The 2004 withdrawal of U.S. Navy dependents represented the nadir in our counterterrorism relationship. Since then, the government has endeavored to improve relations with the U.S.
- 9.(C) Unlike its neighbors, Bahrain is not blessed with abundant oil and gas, and so has diversified its economy, establishing itself as the wealthiest per capita in the Gulf.
- 10.(C) Bahrain has also expressed long-term interest in nuclear power, and in March, 2008 signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. on a joint nuclear research project.
- 11.(U) In August 2006, the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement entered into force -- the culmination of a multiyear effort to open and reform Bahrain's economy.
- 12.(C) King Hamad is personable and engaging. He rules as something of a "corporate king," giving direction and letting his top people manage the day-to-day operations.
- 13.(S) The Bahrainis are delighted to have their shared early warning voice line operational. They also look forward to having the CENTRIX base in Bahrain.
- 14.(S) As you know the King approved the movement of P-3 operations to Isa Air Base next year. A detailed briefing on that movement will be provided in the next few days.
- 15.(U) While the counter-piracy deployment conducted by the Frigate Sabha was very short (approximately 30 days), the extensive ship repairs are well underway.